

Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun (ed.)

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Common Trends – Recent Developments – Diachronic Aspects

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The Particle *rā-* in Libyan Arabic Dialects (with Emphasis on the Arabic Dialect of Msallāta)

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the particle *rā-* in the Arabic dialect of Msallāta¹ and some examples of its use, and to collate or confront the material gathered by me with the existing information about the particle in publications devoted to the dialects of Libya. The article is divided into two parts. First, I discuss publications, which address the issue of the particle *rā-* in Western Arabic dialects, I also present some detailed texts as those concerning Moroccan and Algiers Arabic. Subsequently, I discuss the particle *rā-* in the dialect of Msallāta and other Libyan Arabic dialects, while focusing on its meaning. I compare my findings and examples with existing language data and information that I found in previous publications, such as grammatical descriptions and collections of texts.

Catherine Taine-Cheikh in her absorbing article entitled *Grammaticalized Uses of the Verb ʕa(a) in Arabic: a Maghrebian Specificity?* wrote the following about the particle *rā-*² in Libyan Arabic: ‘According to what information is

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¹ Masallāta (Libyan Arabic: Msallāta) is a town located in the north-western part of Libya, now in Al-Marqab district (in years 2001-2007 in Tarhūna wa-Masallāta district). The town is situated about 100 km from Tripoli and 115 km from Miṣrāta. The closest city, about 30 km away, is Al-Xums – the capital of Al-Marqab district. The population of Msallāta is around 24,000.

² Referring to Msallāta dialect and when writing in general about the particle *rā-* I use the notation *rā-*. Therefore, I do not take into account the emphasatisation of the consonant *r* (*rā-*), because it is not an emphasized consonant in that position in every dialect. However, when I

available on Libya, occurrences of *rā-* are few and far between' (Taine-Cheikh 2013: 134). However, it is difficult to make an explicit claim that occurrence of *rā-* is rare, since there is still very little information on the dialects of Libya, especially their grammatical descriptions. Also most of the texts that have been recorded are not available at all. Therefore it is difficult to find a substantial amount of data on the particle *rā-*. There are only a few mentions in the available literature, supported by several examples. Is this related to the fact that 'occurrences of *rā-* [in Libyan Arabic] are few and far between'?

2. The Particle *rā-* and its Origin in Arabic Dialects of North Africa

One of the first cross-linguistic overviews of the particle *rā-* in Western Arabic dialects was made by Wolfdietrich Fischer (1959) in the book *Die Demonstrativen Bildungen der neuarabischen Dialekte: ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik des Arabischen*. On the origin and formation of the particle he wrote that:

'Der Imperativ von *raʔā*. *ra*, in den neuarabischen Dialekten mit langem *ā*: *rā* „siehe“ bekam im Neuarabischen die Bedeutung einer demonstrativen Interjektion „siehe, siehe da, dort“ wie *hā* „siehe, siehe da“. Als demonstrative Interjektion entwickelte sich *rā* wie *hā* zur Satzeinleitungsartikel, die im Gebrauch viel Ähnlichkeit mit *hā* hat, und wie dieses vor allem in den Dialekten Nordafrikas vorkommt' (Fischer 1959: 186-187).

W. Fischer, like the rest of the researchers, sees the origin of the particle *rā-* in Western Arabic dialects in the imperative form *ra* of the verb *raʔā – yarā* 'to see'. The imperative *ra* was given demonstrative interjection meaning, and then became *die Satzeinleitungsartikel* – 'a sentence introducing particle'. According to W. Fischer (1959: 187) it was possible only because other forms of the verb *raʔā – yarā* 'to see' do not exist in most³ of the Arabic dialects of North Africa.⁴ Thence continues his argument:

quote other authors, I keep the originally used transcription. The verb *raʔā – yarā* in Classical Arabic I transcribe as *raʔā – yarā*.

³ Sumikazu Yoda (2005) suggests in his book *The Arabic Dialect of the Jews of Tripoli (Libya): Grammar, Text and Glossary* that according to W. Fischer, in dialects of North Africa various conjugations of the verb 'to see' are not used and points out that 'TJ [the Arabic dialect of Jews of Tripoli, M. K.] has whole series of the conjugation of *raʔ*' (Yoda 2005: 130). However, W. Fischer (1959: 187) notes that this verb in most dialects of the region does not have other forms.

⁴ It is worth noting that in Libyan Arabic dialects (e.g. Benghazi, Msallāta, ELA) exist multiple 'frozen' forms of the verb *raʔā – yarā* 'to see'.

‘Die Entwicklung von *rā* zur demonstrativen Interjektion und Satzeinleitungsartikel wurde begünstigt dadurch, daß die übrigen Formen von *raʔā* in den meisten Dialekten des Gebietes nicht mehr vorhanden sind, so daß *raʔā* in seiner konkreten Bedeutung „sehen“ nicht mehr mit *rā* „siehe da“, „da ist...“ assoziiert werden konnte’ (Fischer 1959: 187).

C. Taine-Cheikh (2013), already mentioned earlier, has made an extensive overview of the particle *rā*- in dialects of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and particularly in the dialect of Mauritania). In her article she focuses on the grammaticalization of the verb *raʔā* – *yarā* ‘to see’ in Arabic dialects. Apart from the particle *rā*- she mentions other grammaticalized forms of this verb in Arabic dialects. This leads her to the following conclusion:

‘Given that *ra(a)* is found throughout the Maghreb (and only there), one could consider it a characteristic trait of Northern African Arabic. However, the diversity of the trait’s manifestations in the Maghrebian dialects on the one hand, and the similarities between Maghrebian *ra(a)* and “Middle-Eastern” *tara(a)*⁵ on the other hand, show that this trait is far from useful for purposes of distinction’ (Taine-Cheikh 2013: 154).

Philippe Marçais (1960: 580) in his short description of Western Arabic dialects in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition* recognizes the particle *rā*- as one of the main characteristics of the dialects of North Africa, which was also noticed by C. Taine-Cheikh (2013: 122) at the beginning of her article.

Particularly noteworthy is the article by Dominique Caubet (1992) devoted entirely to the particles *rā*- and *hā*- in Moroccan dialects. There is no other study that focuses entirely on the particle *rā*- in various dialects of North Africa. Very important are the references made by Aziza Boucherit in her grammatical description of Algiers Arabic (2002: 61-62, 142-143, 156-157) and her entry in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (2006: 64). Examples of the use of the particle *rā*- also appear in dictionaries and collections of dialectal texts. Their detailed review is available in the references of C. Taine-Cheikh’s paper (2013: 155-159).

3. The Particle *rā*- in the Dialect of Msallāta and Other Libyan Arabic Dialects

Information on the particle *rā*- in Libyan Arabic dialects can be found, among others, in Adam Benkato (2014) and Ester Panetta (1943, 1943b, 1980), who devoted their publications to the dialect of Benghazi. Sumikazu Yoda (2005) provides interesting data on the demonstrative sentence and introduces the particle *aʔa* in the Arabic dialect of the Jews of Tripoli. Jonathan Owens

⁵ See: Fischer 1959: 195-198.

(1984) also mentions the particle *rā-* in his grammatical description of Eastern Libyan Arabic (ELA). Several examples from Tripoli Arabic, although nowadays probably somewhat outdated, are in the collection of texts and grammar outline of Tripoli Arabic, collected by Hans Stumme (1898). Christophe Pereira (2010) collected data from the same dialect in the description of the Arabic grammar of Tripoli and in a co-authored article on the intonation of topic and focus in four Afro-asiatic languages (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015).

It seems that all researchers who described or mentioned the particle *rā-* in Arabic dialects of North Africa, agree that it is derived from the verb *raʔā – yarā* ‘to see’ (Fischer 1959: 186-187). The particle *rā-* does not stand alone and is combined with pronominal suffixes, which in the dialect of Msallāta are attached as follows:

Singular	
1 st person	<i>rāni</i>
2 nd person	<i>rānək / rāk</i>
3 rd person m.	<i>rāhu</i>
3 rd person f.	<i>rāhi</i>
Plural	
1 st person	<i>rāna</i>
2 nd person m.	<i>rākum</i>
2 nd person f.	<i>rākən</i>
3 rd person m.	<i>rāhum</i>
3 rd person f.	<i>rāhən</i>

The particle *rā-* in the first person singular has the suffixed object pronoun *-ni*, rather than the pronominal suffix *-yi*, which is usually attached to words ending with a vowel *-a*. In the second person singular the particle *rā-* has two forms: *rānək* and *rāk*. The form *rānək* with the nasal consonant *n* occurs in some dialects of North Africa. C. Taine-Cheikh (2013: 123) notes examples of the particle *rā-* with the consonant *n* in Mauritanian Ḥassāniyya, however, it occurs in the first and second person singular and plural: *rāni* (1 sg.), *rānak* (2 m. sg.), *rānək* (2 f. sg.), *rānnā* (1 pl.), *rānkum* (2 pl.). W. Fischer explains the origin of the nasal consonant *n* in other personal forms than in the first person singular as follows:

‘In der 1. Pers. sg. *rāni* konnte das Suffix als Possessivsuffix *-i* statt als Objektsuffix *-ni* aufgefaßt werden. Durch die falsche Trennung *rān-i* entstand ein neuer Stamm *rān-*, von dem aus vereinzelt neue Formen wieder mit Personalsuffixen abgeleitet werden’ (Fischer 1959: 192).

W. Fischer claims that he based his claim on the findings of Ettore Rossi (1924-1925, 1925-1926), however, it is not reflected in Rossi’s articles he

quotes.⁶ W. Fischer believes that the dialect speakers interpreted the suffixed object pronoun *-ni* as possessive suffix *-ī*, which led to its separation and the creation of a new stem *rān-*, to which pronominal suffixes are attached. At the same time, he uses a quite judgmental term *die falsche Trennung* – ‘the false separation’, which today, I think, no Arabic dialectologist would use. It is hard to imagine that any native speaker would be aware of the fact that it is ‘a false separation’. W. Fischer applied this theory also with regard to the particle *hā-* with pronominal suffixes. Notwithstanding, William Marçais and Jelloûli Farès (1933: 64) registered two types of the particle *hā-*: with and without nasal consonant *n* (Fischer 1959: 166) in the dialect of Al-Ĥamma / Ĥamma (Gabès, Tunisia). It must be stressed that the particle *hā-* in the first person singular with the nasal consonant is in the form *hānni*. At the same time W. Fischer notes that the etymology proposed by the author (mentions only W. Marçais) is highly unlikely because of phonological reasons (Fischer 1959: 166). I mention this because the particle *hā-* with nasal consonant *n* exists also in the dialect of Msallāta. However, this applies only to the particle *hā-* with the first person singular pronominal suffix: *hāni* / *?āni* and the second person singular pronominal suffix: *hānək* / *?ānək* (analogously to particle *rā-*). This is largely due to the fact that if the particle *hā-* was accompanied by the pronominal suffix *-k* (2 sg.), as it is used with the particle *rā-* – *rāk* (2 sg.), the following form: *hāk* (2 sg.) would appear. However, the word *hāk* already exists in the dialect of Msallāta and expresses the meaning of the verb ‘to take’ in the imperative mode: *hāk* ‘take! (m.)’. Thus, the existing form *hānək* extended with the nasal consonant *n* may indicate that homogeneous forms are avoided in the dialect of Msallāta. In this case, in my opinion, the consonant *n* does not have to be described as a result of *die falsche Trennung* (‘the false separation’) because it has a fully different function – it eliminates homonymic forms from the language. Perhaps under the influence of the form *hānək*, the form *rānək* was created, which is the second possible form apart from *rāk* (2 sg.).

Based on publications on Libyan Arabic dialects, where the particle *rā-* is presented together with particular pronominal suffixes, it is possible to make a compilation and comparison of the different forms of the particle *rā-* in the dialects of Tripoli (data from two authors), Benghazi, ELA and Msallāta.⁷

⁶ In the five-piece article of E. Rossi, I was not able to find information that would confirm the explanation contained in W. Fischer (1959: 192): ‘Diesem Vorgang verdankt (Tripolitan., Beduin./Tarhūna) *rānek* seine Entstehung Rossi, Po. Tr. 195 [...]’. The quoted information should be found, according to W. Fischer, on page 195, but no part of the article *Poesia popolare della Tripolitania. Canti storici* is on this page. Moreover, in all parts of the article particle *rā-* appears only twice with the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix: *u-rāhu gāib* (Rossi 1925-1926: 169), *u-yā sābgi rāhu l-ḥūrūb ngēša* (Rossi 1925-1926: 389). E. Rossi has not registered the form *rānek*.

⁷ I take into account only those publications, where patterns (or information how individual patterns can be created) have been given.

	Msallāta	Tripoli ⁸	Tripoli ⁹	Tripoli ¹⁰	Benghazi ¹¹	ELA ¹²
Singular						
1 st p.	<i>rāni</i>	<i>ṛāni</i>	<i>ṛāni</i>	<i>rāni</i>	<i>rānī</i>	<i>rāni</i>
2 nd p. m.	<i>rānək /</i>	<i>ṛāk</i>	<i>ṛāk</i>	<i>rāk</i>	<i>rāk</i>	<i>rāk</i>
2 nd p. f.	<i>rāk</i>		<i>ṛāki</i>		<i>rāki</i>	<i>rāk (?)</i>
3 rd p. m.	<i>rāhu</i>	<i>ṛāhu</i>	<i>ṛāhu /</i> <i>ṛāh</i>	<i>rāhu /</i> <i>rāh¹³</i>	<i>rāhū</i>	<i>rāh</i>
3 rd p. f.	<i>rāhi</i>	<i>ṛāhi</i>	<i>ṛāhi</i>	<i>rāhi</i>	<i>rāhī</i>	<i>rāha</i>
Plural						
1 st p.	<i>rāna</i>	<i>ṛāna</i>	<i>ṛāna</i>	<i>rāna</i>	<i>rānā</i>	<i>rāna</i>
2 nd p. m.	<i>rākum</i>	<i>ṛākūm</i>	<i>ṛākum</i>	<i>rākum</i>	<i>rākam</i>	<i>rākam</i>
2 nd p. f.	<i>rākən</i>				<i>rākan</i>	<i>rākan</i>
3 rd p. m.	<i>rāhum</i>	<i>ṛāhūm</i>	<i>ṛāhum</i>	<i>rāhum</i>	<i>rāhum</i>	<i>rāhum</i>
3 rd p. f.	<i>rāhən</i>				<i>rāhen</i>	<i>rāhin</i>

The form of nasal consonant *n* with the second person pronominal suffix appears only in the dialect of Msallāta. In the dialect of Tripoli the forms of the particle *ra-* presented by H. Stumme and Ch. Pereira are convergent, although it is worth noting that Ch. Pereira records the consonant *r* as emphatic consonant *ṛ*. In the article from 2015 Ch. Pereira (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105) adds a form of the particle *rā-* for the second person feminine singular, which was not included in his grammatical description of Tripoli Arabic. H. Stumme finds the third person masculine singular, a shortened form *rāh*, without vowel *u* in the coda in the dialect of Tripoli, which is also mentioned in Ch. Pereira's quoted article (2015). As H. Stumme points out, *rāh* is used rarely, but Ch. Pereira also notes that:

‘The third person masculine singular forms *ṛa:=h* and *ṛa:=hu* are grammaticalized and invariable. In Tripoli Arabic, they can replace the forms referring to any other person and thus precede any predicate’ (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105).

J. Owens (1984: 210-211) observes in ELA an identical particle – *rāh*, and the only possible form of this particle is noted for the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix. ELA is also characterized by a different form of the third person feminine singular, namely *rāha*, not *rāhi*, as in other mentioned dialects. Both the dialect of Benghazi and ELA, have identical particles for the

⁸ Pereira 2010: 256.

⁹ Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105.

¹⁰ Stumme 1898: 285.

¹¹ Panetta 1943b: 124-125, 250-251, 1980: 203.

¹² Owens 1984: 92, 210-211.

¹³ A form used less frequently.

second person masculine plural *rākam* and the second person feminine plural *rākan*. However, if we look at the latest findings of A. Benkato (2014: 84), who noted the following pronominal suffixes in Benghazi: *-kəm* (m. pl.) and *-kən* (f. pl.), the particles should have the following forms: *rākəm* (m. pl.) and *rākən* (f. pl.). The same goes for the particle *rā-* with the third person feminine plural pronominal suffix, which according to the data contained in A. Benkato (2014: 84) has the form *-hun: rāhun*, not *rāhen*, according to E. Panetta (1943b: 125).

4. The Particle *rā-* and its Meaning

The first information about the meaning of the particle *rā-* can be found already in the collection of dialectal texts in Tripoli Arabic by H. Stumme. He wrote very succinctly and *inter alia* about the importance of the particle *rā-*:

‘râ (arâ) wird in der Bedeutung *da bin ich, da bist du* etc. – nur mit Pronominalsuffixen zusammengesetzt – gebraucht, es dient ferner zur Hervorhebung des persönl. Pronomens oder des Verbs oder zur Einleitung des Nachsatzes oder einer Warnung (râ wird auch bei Anrede an ein Femininum gebraucht)’ (Stumme 1898: 239)

‘râ mit Suffixen (râni, râk, râhu oder – selten – râh, râhi, râna, râkum, râhum; râ natürlich ursprünglich = Imper. sing. v. رأى *sehen*) wird fast genau so wie hâ mit Suffixen angewandt. Es giebt namentlich häufig unser *denn* wieder’ (Stumme 1898: 285)

H. Stumme’s most important remarks are that the particle *rā-* is used to emphasize personal pronouns or verbs, to introduce the clause in sentence final position, and to express a warning. He observes that the particle *rā-* usually represents literally the meaning of the German conjunction *denn* ‘because’. C. Taine-Cheikh (2013: 134) invoking information contained in Ch. Pereira’s grammatical description (2010: 256) writes that ‘in Tripoli, the use of *rā-* does not seem to be widespread, except as a presentative’. In another paper, Ch. Pereira (2015) describes the particle *rā-* as a focus marker. This is consistent with the findings of H. Stumme (1898: 239) who used a German term *Hervorhebung* ‘emphasis’ in relation to the particle *rā-*. Ch. Pereira writes the following about the meaning of *rā-* in Tripoli Arabic:

‘In Tripoli Arabic, the particle *ra:* is used to focus the predicate or the entire predicative relation. This morpheme is used with a clitic pronoun that is co-referent with the subject of the utterance’ (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105).

In a similar manner Martine Vanhove (1996) writes about the particle *raʕ* in Yemeni Arabic, which derives also from the verb *raʕā – yarā* ‘to see’. J. Owens describes the particle *rā-* as a ‘subject emphasizee’:

‘*Rā* is a subject emphazier which takes object pronouns of set A.

With a simple clause it emphasizes the subject with a meaning something like, ‘watch out, take care, be careful’, [...]’ (Owens 1984: 210).

In the dialect of Msallāta and other Libyan Arabic dialects discussed here, the particle *rā-* stands before the verb in perfective and imperfective form, adjective, participle, noun and personal pronoun. The meaning of the particle *rā-* is complex. Nonetheless, four main meanings can be distinguished. Namely, the particle *rā-* is mostly used to express: a declaration (‘indeed’, ‘hereby’, ‘already’ etc.), a presentative, a warning (‘watch out’, ‘beware’, ‘be careful’ etc.) and reasoning (‘because’ etc.). It should be noted that in certain cases the particle *rā-* may refer to more than one of the proposed meanings, which are still convergent and coherent.

In the dialect of Msallāta, the particle *rā-* standing before adjectives in attributive relations is used in order to explain a reason and its meaning is closely related with a preceding sentence. A sentence beginning with the particle *rā-* taken out of context can be difficult to understand. It is known, however, that is a continuation of a preceding sentence:

- (1) *rāni mrīd*¹⁴
‘[...] because I am sick’.
- (2) *rāhi mahbūla*
‘[...] because she is stupid’.
- (3) *rāhi ḥaržāna*
‘[...] because she is angry’.

The sentence *rāni mrīd* was also registered by Ch. Pereira (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 106) in Tripoli Arabic and E. Panetta (1980: 211) in Benghazi Arabic. The first translates it as ‘I am so / really ill!’, and the second as ‘eccomi (io sono) malato’, which A. Benkato (2014: 83) incorporates to his description of Benghazi Arabic as ‘I’m sick’. However, in order to create a sentence such as ‘I am sick’ in the dialect of Msallāta, the adjective should be preceded only by a personal pronoun:

- (4) *?anē mrīd*
‘I am sick’.

As for the explanation of a reason, it is particularly evident with preceding information:

- (5) *ḡudwa mā nəḡdərš ʔnži lə-l-ʕamal rāni mrīd*
‘I cannot come to work tomorrow because I am sick’.
- (6) *Ḥlīma mšət əl-ḥōš būha rāhi ḥaržāna*
‘Ḥlīma went to her father’s house because she is angry’.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise stated, examples come from the dialect of Msallāta.

Naturally, the above sentences can be translated also without the conjunction ‘because’, however, their meaning would not be fully reflected. Several examples of the particle *rā-* in such use can be also found in H. Stumme’s Tripoli Arabic texts.

- (7) *gālūlhā xūthā [...] mā nwāṣṣūk šāla šē, kân šallgāttōšā. rāhi mrābbijā mšāna, rūddi bālek mínhā* (Stumme 1898: 7, l. 28). ‘Ihre Brüder versetzten: „[...] wir brauchen dir auch weiter keinen Ratschlag zu geben ausser inbetreff der Katze, denn die ist bei uns aufgewachsen, darum gieb Acht, – was sie betrifft!“’
 ‘Her brothers told her: [...] we do not entrust you anything else except the cat because she [the cat, M. K.] grew up with us, take care of her’.
- (8) *māšāš telgūni áktar. rāhu-lbibân essittā kímělu* (Stumme 1898: 9, l. 23). ‘[...] so werdet ihr mich nimmermehr lebendig antreffen, denn die ersten sechs Thore sind vernichtet, [...]’.
 ‘[...] you (pl.) will not find me anymore because the first six gates are destroyed [...]’.
- (9) *bāš ẽngūlylhā māšādeš tāxudi mínñj-ẽṣṣgār rāhi úmmhum tıby téklib* (Stumme 1898: 17, l. 14). ‘[...] um ihr zu sagen, dass sie mir kein Kind mehr entführen soll; denn die Mutter will wahnsinnig werden, [...]’.
 ‘[...] to tell her that she should not take children from me because their mother will go mad [...]’.

E. Panetta (1943a) translates the particle *rā-* as *ecco* ‘here, here you are’ in texts from Benghazi. However, some examples can be interpreted as an explanation of a reason and/or as a declaration:

- (10) *gāl-ẽ-lhā: šáddi! rā-ki mšālleḡa* (Panetta 1943a: 129, l. 14).
 ‘Le disse: vattene! Eccoti ripudiata’.
 ‘He told her: Get out because you are divorced’. / ‘He told her: Get out! You are divorced’.

The particle *rā-* occurring before nouns in most cases introduces a declaration and/or an explanation of a reason:

- (11) *gulylhūm nūdu, óhorbu, rāhi-lgūlā díbhāt benāwýthā* (Stumme 1898: 15, l. 35).
 ‘[...] sprach zu ihnen: „Steht auf! Flieht! Denn die Menschenfresserin hier hat ihre Töchter abgeschlachtet [...]“’.
 ‘[...] he told them: Get up! Run away because the man-eater has slaughtered her daughters [...]’. / ‘[...] he told them: Get up! Run away! The man-eater has slaughtered her daughters [...]’.
- (12) *mšā l-úmm-ẽ-hūm u gāl-ẽ-lhā: wáttí hāl-ek; rā-hū, er-rámy yōm el-xamís* (Panetta 1943a: 113, l. 7).

‘Andò (il padre) dalla loro mamma e le disse: fa in modo che tutto sia bene in ordine (lett.: prepara il tuo stato); ecco, il *rámy* (avrà luogo) giovedì’.

‘He (the father) went to their mother and told her: Get ready because *er-ramy*¹⁵ will be on Thursday’. / ‘He (the father) went to their mother and told her: Get ready! *Er-Ramy* will be on Thursday’.

- (13) *gālet-é-lhom: tórbēḥō, xaššēšū-nī žōūwā; rā-hū, bāṭn-ī tówžaʕ fī-yya!* (Panetta 1943a: 148, l. 4).

‘Disse loro (cioè ai servitori): ci guadagnerete, fatemi entrare dentro; ecco, mi fa male lo stomaco (lett.: il mio stomaco duole in me)!’

‘She told them: You (pl.) make money! Let me in because my stomach is in pain’. / ‘She told them: You (pl.) make money! Let me in! My stomach is in pain’.

In other cases the particle *rā-* is used to introduce a declaration, a presentative and emphasizes a subject:

- (14) *jélgā úxtāh kātēbā fihā: [...]* *rāni fylhōl elkēbīr* (Stumme 1898: 9, l. 22).

‘[...] dass ihm seine Schwester schrieb: „[...] Ich befinde mich in grosser Not!“’

‘[...] his sister wrote to him in it (a letter): [...] I am in a great despair’.

- (15) *gāltīlhā júmmi, rāni ānē* (Stumme 1898: 12, l. 30).

‘[...] da sprach diese letzte: „Mutter, das bin ich ja [...]“’.

‘[...] she told her: Mother, it is me [...]’.

- (16) *u gālét l-ah: rā-hī, hīya, ūmm el-bént, tsállem flē-k u gālét l-ak: el-bént faṭēt-hā l-ak hadīya* (Panetta 1943a: 30, l. 29).

‘E gli disse: ecco, essa, la mamma della ragazza, ti saluta e ti dice (lett.: ti ha detto): la ragazza te l’ho data (in) regalo’.

‘And she told him: She – the girl’s mother – greets you and tells you: The girl I gave you is a gift’.

- (17) *dār éllī gāl l-ah el-fēgīh. rā-hī el-mērâh, terged u tgūl: [...]* (Panetta 1943a: 161, l. 17).

‘Fece ciò che gli disse il *fēgīh*. Ecco la donna, dormire e dire: [...]’.

‘He did what the *faṭīh* said. Indeed the woman is falling asleep and talking: [...]’.

The particle *rā-* occurs before verbs in the perfect and imperfect form, and also before active participles. One of the possible meanings in this case is a declaration. However, it should be noted that as for this meaning all registered examples in the dialect of Msallāta are in the first person singular or plural form.

¹⁵ *Ramy* (lit. ‘throwing’) is a custom of bringing gifts by the groom’s family to the bride’s house and laying them down in front of her (Panetta 1943a: 117).

- (18) *rāni xaššēt*
 ‘(Yeah) I have entered’.

J. Owens (1984: 210) translates the same sentence in ELA as ‘Watch out, I’ve entered’. Therefore, he explains its meaning as a warning. However, it seems that this is rather a predicative focus. Other examples from Msallāta:

- (19) *rāni žīt*
 ‘(Yeah) I have come’.
- (20) *rāni žāy*
 ‘I am on the way!’ / ‘I will be right away!’
- (21) *rāna bnəmšu, saggəd rūḥək*
 ‘We are going, hurry up!’ / ‘We are leaving, hurry up!’
- (22) *rāni bnəmši*
 ‘I will go now’. / ‘I am going’.
- (23) *rāni bənžik*
 ‘I am coming to you’.
- (24) *rāni nrāži fik*
 ‘I am waiting for you (now)’.

It seems that also in the dialect of Benghazi the particle *rā-* before a verb has a meaning of a declaration. In E. Panetta’s texts it appears in the following example:

- (25) *u gālet el-bént-ě-hā el-kēbīra: rā-nī, ſaṭēt-ek* (Panetta 1943a: 127, l. 18).
 ‘[...] e disse alla sua figlia maggiore: ecco, ti ho sposata (let.: ti ha data)’.
 ‘[...] and she told her eldest daughter: I have (already) married you off’.

E. Panetta notes also in the dialect of Benghazi an example of the particle *rā-* with the third person masculine pronominal suffix, which is followed by a negation and a verb in the imperfective form:

- (26) *u gālet l-ūmm-ě-hā: rā-hū, mā ibbī-š ḥadd ɛlla ɛnti u anā* (Panetta 1943a: 31, l. 5).
 ‘[...] e disse a sua madre: ecco, non vuole nessuno eccetto tu e io’.
 ‘[...] and she told her mother: he does not want anyone else except you and me’.

The particle *rā-* in Libyan Arabic dialects plays an important role in the formation of counterfactual conditionals. Namely, *rā-* introduces an apodosis clause in counterfactual conditionals. Examples suggest that the particle *rā-* opening the apodosis clause – occurs in Msallāta, Benghazi, Tripoli and ELA:

- (27) *lū kān grēt rāk ʾnʒaḥʾt*
 ‘If you (m. sg.) had learned, you (m. sg.) would have achieved success’.
- (28) *lū kān grēti rāk ʾnʒaḥti*
 ‘If you (f. sg.) had learned, you (f. sg.) would have achieved success’.
- (29) *lōkān ʒat rāni kitab-ta* (Owens 1984: 210).
 ‘If she had come I would have written it’.
- (30) *kān git-l-i inna ṭṭayyibū, rā-nī gəʃʻədt* (Benkato 2014: 84).
 ‘If you had told me that they would cook, I would have stayed!’
- (31) *lukʾān mnēššēd fākkēni, rāni mýtt* (Stumme 1898: 5, l. 3).
 ‘Hätte mich nicht der Löwe gerettet, – ja dann wäre ich tot!’
 ‘If the lion had not saved me, I would have been dead’.
- (32) *lūkānāh šēd, rāhu lgināhā* (Stumme 1898: 33, l. 18).
 ‘Käme ein Löwe in Frage, so hätten wir doch eine Spur von ihr gefunden’.
 ‘If it had been a lion, we would have found her’.

The last example (32) also indicates that the particle *rā-* with the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix acts as a ‘fossilized’ particle. It can occur before a verb in all persons (not only in the third person masculine singular), as well as a noun in feminine form and all personal pronouns. This type of particle appears in this form in the dialect of Tripoli (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105) but also in the dialect of Benghazi. In the following examples it has a meaning of a declaration:

- (33) *gālilha jā-mrā, ʃēb ʃālik tkellēmīni? rāhu nāxud ʃālik mrā-ūxra*
 (Stumme 1898: 31, l. 21).
 ‘[er] sprach zu ihr „Liebe Frau, ist’s denn eine Schande für dich, mit mir zu reden? Dann muss ich wiederum eine Frau nehmen!“’
 ‘He told her: Woman, are you ashamed of talking to me? So I take another woman in your place’.
- (34) *u gāl el-wāšūn-ah u ʻel-ʃeyāl-a: rā-hū, anā māšī li ʔž-žēnn yegtél-nī*
 (Panetta 1943a: 53, l. 10).
 ‘E disse a sua moglie e ai suoi figli: ecco, adesso mi reco dal *ǧinn* (perchè) mi uccida’.
 ‘And he told his wife and family: I am going to the *jinn*, to kill me’.
- (35) *gālet l-ah: rā-hū, mšēt fī ḥōš fēlān u lǧēt l-ak el-bēnāt et-tēnēn, smāḥ tǧūl ǧzāyēlāt* (Panetta 1943a: 112, l. 19).
 ‘[...] gli disse: ecco, sono andata in casa del tale e ti ho trovato le due ragazze, belle come (lett.: diresti) gazzelle’.
 ‘[...] she told him: I went to someone’s house and found you two girls, beautiful, you would say, as gazelles’.

- (36) *u gāl el-bū-hūm: rā-hū, el-késwa žat* (Panetta 1943a: 113, l. 4).
 ‘E disse al loro padre: ecco, la roba è arrivata; [...]’.
 ‘He told their father: So the clothes have arrived’.
- (37) *edži marr óxrā; rā-hū, errîd-ak* (Panetta 1943a: 145, l. 25).
 ‘[...] domani alla stessa ora (lett.:questo tempo), vieni un’altra volta; ecco, ti voglio’.
 ‘I will come again. I want you’. / ‘I will come again, because I want you’.
- (38) *gālet-é-lhā: ya mm-ī, rā-hū, šahhâta tēbki u tgūl [...]* (Panetta 1943a: 148, l. 5).
 ‘[...] le disse: o padrona (lett.: o mamma mia), ecco, una mendicante piange e dice: [...]’.
 ‘[...] she told her: Oh mother, a beggar is crying and saying: [...]’.
- (39) *u rā-hū, bókra nībbī nšil el-bēnt nzāuwáz-hā* (Panetta 1943a: 145, l. 18).
 ‘Ed ecco, domani intendo portare la ragazza (maggiore per) sposarla’.
 ‘And tomorrow I want to bring the girl to marry her’.

Ch. Pereira also registered that in the dialect of Tripoli the particle *rā-* ‘can appear at the end of an utterance and thus focus the entire predicative relation’ (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105):

- (40) *dāyera Libya kullha gdīma šwēya rāh* (Caron, Lux, Manfredi, Pereira 2015: 105).
 ‘It has (already) been through all Libya; it’s a little bit old indeed!
 (“the whole of Libya” knows it already!).’

One of the most common meanings of the particle *rā-* is the expression of a warning. In most cases *rā-* is used with the second person pronominal suffixes. Not always the meaning of the utterance can be substituted by a phrase such as ‘watch out’, ‘be careful’ etc., so it can be also reflected by negation.

- (41) *rāk tamsī gādi*
 ‘Be careful when you go there’. / ‘Do not go there’. / ‘You had better not gone there’.
- (42) *rāk tamsī*
 ‘Do not go (m. sg., f. sg.)!’ / ‘You had better not gone there’.
- (43) *rāk trəyyhi l-flūs*
 ‘Be careful to not lose (f. sg.) the money!’ / ‘Keep (f. sg.) an eye on the money!’ / ‘Do not lose (f. sg.) the money!’
- (44) *rāk tākəl halba*
 ‘Careful, you eat (m. sg.) too much!’ / ‘Be careful, do not eat (m. sg.) too much!’
- (45) *rānək tušurbi šašir*
 ‘Do not drink (f. sg.) wine!’

- (46) *rāk taftaḥ ət-təlfəzyōn*
 ‘You better not turn on the TV!’ / ‘Do not turn on the TV!’
- (47) *rāk ittīḥ* (Benkato 2014: 84).
 ‘Watch out, you’ll fall!’
- (48) *ugālūlhā šākkēri-İgāsēr mtāʿak; rāk tūtēlli* (Stumme 1898: 8, l. 6).
 ‘[...] nachdem sie ihr nochmals gesagt: „Schliess dich in deinem Schloss ein! Verlass es ja nicht [...]!“
 ‘[...] they told her: lock yourself in the castle, do not go out [...]!’
- (49) *gālīlhā-İgūl, tésemfi, jā-bīnt, rāk ət-kéllēmi wūllā tēdui mīḩēh* (Stumme 1898: 30, l. 31).
 ‘Der Menschenfresser aber hatte ihr zuvor gesagt: „Höre, Mädchen! Hüte dich, zu sprechen und mit dem Prinzen zu reden!“
 ‘The man-eater told her: Listen, girl, do not talk to him!’

The particle *rā-* in the meaning of a warning may also occur with the third person pronominal suffixes, but the statement is addressed to the second person. The verb agrees in grammatical person and number with the preceding particle *rā-*. The recipient of the utterance in the second person is usually expressed by (1) a pronominal suffix attached to a subject or (2) an object pronoun suffix attached to a verb or a preposition.

- (50) *rā-hī təlāʿt* (sic!) *bīnt-ik* (Benkato 2014: 84).¹⁶
 ‘Take care, your daughter went out!’
- (51) *gālītlāh* [...] *rāhum ityḩu mīnnek* (Stumme 1898: 38, l. 8).
 ‘[Dschemila] sprach: „[...] Lass sie dir ja nicht abhanden kommen!“
 ‘[Jamila] said: [...] Do not lose them!’ / ‘She said: be careful not to lose them!’
- (52) *gālīlāh ellulēd jā-xāli, rāhu būi jībby jýgutlāk* (Stumme 1898: 19, l. 27).
 ‘Der [Knabe] aber sprach zu ihm: „Lieber Onkel, mein Vater will dich töten; [...]“
 ‘The boy told him: Uncle, beware, my father wants to kill you [...]’.
- (53) *rāhu yrəyyaḩ əl-flūs*
 ‘Do not let him lose the money!’

Only in the last example (53) there is no reference to the second person. The sentence can be unclear without embedding in the context of a preceding statement.

¹⁶ Cf. with Msallāta: *rāhi bəntək tulfət* ‘Be careful, your (m. sg., f. sg.) daughter went out!’.

5. Conclusion

Previous research gives the impression that the particle *rā-* occurs quite rarely in Libyan Arabic dialects. In collections of texts by H. Stumme and E. Panetta the particle *rā-* is mentioned over a dozen times. However, previous works show only a few examples of its occurrence and use. I think the method of gathering data by recording narrative texts given by a single person has the effect that the particle *rā-* is rarely or not at all found in such texts. In order to find more examples it is required to modify the method of data gathering, for example record (more) conversations and dialogues. The confirmation of this may be the fact that in most examples that I found in narrative texts from Tripoli and Benghazi, the particle *rā-* occurs after the verb ‘to tell, say’.

Among all examples with the particle *rā-* in the dialects of Msallāta, Tripoli, Banghazi and ELA, I distinguished four semantic meanings. The particle *rā-* introduces: a warning, a presentative, a declaration and a reason. However, it should be noted, that one semantic meaning does not exclude the others in the same sentence. Only more registered examples can allow in the future extracting more detailed meanings of the particle *rā-*, its use and deeper analysis.

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